CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A method for protecting data associated with a first image file after the first image file has been replaced with a second image file in an appliance server, the method comprising:

a)   partitioning a hard disk of the appliance server into a plurality of partitions, wherein at least one of the plurality of partitions is a hidden partition; and

b)   copying the data associated with the first image file to the hidden partition, wherein the data in the hidden partition is invisible to a network operating system during normal server operation.

2.   The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one hidden partition is created using a SETMAX command.

3.   The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one hidden partition is adapted to store data associated with a plurality of image files.

4.   The method of claim 3 further comprising:

c)   initiating a re-provisioning event prior to copying step (b); and

d)   determining whether the hidden partition includes data associated with the second image file.

5.   The method of claim 4 further comprising:

e)   placing the data associated with the second image in a data partition of the plurality of partitions if the hidden partition includes such data, wherein the data partition is visible to the network operating system during normal server operation.

6.   The method of claim 5 further comprising:

f)   replacing the first image file with the second image file; and

g)   completing the re-provisioning event.

7.   The method of claim 1, wherein the image file includes an application, files required for installation and execution of the application and, when the application requires a corresponding operating system to operate, additional files for the corresponding operating system.

8.   A computer readable medium containing program instructions for protecting data associated with a first image file after the first image file has been replaced with a second image file in an appliance server, the instructions for:

a)   partitioning a hard disk of the appliance server into a plurality of partitions, wherein at least one of the plurality of partitions is a hidden partition; and

b)   copying the data associated with the first image file to the hidden partition, wherein the data in the hidden partition is invisible to a network operating system during normal server operation.

9. The computer readable medium of claim 8, wherein the at least one hidden partition is created using a SETMAX command.

10. The computer readable medium of claim 8, wherein the at least one hidden partition is adapted to store data associated with a plurality of image files.

11. The method of claim 10 further comprising:

c) initiating a re-provisioning event prior to copying instruction (b); and

d) determining whether the hidden partition includes data associated with the second image file.

12. The computer readable medium of claim 11 further comprising:

e) placing the data associated with the second image in a data partition of the plurality of partitions if the hidden partition includes such data, wherein the data partition is visible to the network operating system during normal server operation.

13. The computer readable medium of claim 8 further comprising:

f) replacing the first image file with the second image file; and

g) completing the re-provisioning event.

14. A hard disk comprising:

a first partition for storing an image file, wherein the first partition stores one image file at one time;

a second partition for storing data associated with the image file, wherein the second

partition is visible to a network operating system in the first partition;

a hidden partition, wherein the hidden partition is invisible to the network operating

system in the first partition;

5   means for replacing a first image file in the first partition with a second image file; and

means for copying the data associated with the first image file from the second partition

to the hidden partition when the first image file in the first partition is replaced with the second

image file.

10   15.   The hard disk of claim 14, wherein the hidden partition is created using a

SETMAX command.

16.   The hard disk of claim 14, wherein the hidden partition is adapted to store data

associated with a plurality of image files.

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17.   The hard disk of claim 16, wherein the hard disk further comprises means for

determining whether the hidden partition includes data associated with the second image file,

and placing the data associated with the second image in the second partition if the hidden

partition includes such data.

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18.   The hard disk of claim 14, wherein the image file includes an application, files

required for installation and execution of the application and, when the application requires a

corresponding operating system to operate, additional files for the corresponding operating system.

19. A data processing system comprising:

a processor;

a storage medium coupled to the processor, wherein the storage medium includes:

a first partition for storing an image file, wherein the first partition stores one image file at one time;

a second partition for storing data associated with the image file, wherein the second partition is visible to a network operating system in the first partition; and

a hidden partition, wherein the hidden partition is invisible to the network operating system in the first partition; and

logic associated with the storage medium for replacing a first image file in the first partition with a second image file, and copying the data associated with the first image file from the second partition to the hidden partition when the first image file in the first partition is replaced with the second image file.

20. The data processing system of claim 19, wherein the logic includes code for determining whether the hidden partition includes data associated with the second image file, and placing the data associated with the second image in the second partition if the hidden partition includes such data.

21.   A method for providing a service that allows at least two clients to share a data processing system while protecting data associated with each of the at least two clients, wherein an active client controls the data processing system at any one time and any other client is inactive, the method comprising:

a)   partitioning a hard disk of the data processing system into a plurality of partitions, wherein at least one of the plurality of partitions is a hidden partition; and

b)   copying the data associated with any inactive client to the hidden partition, wherein the data in the hidden partition is invisible to a network operating system during normal operation of the data processing system.

22.   The method of claim 21 further comprising:

c)   allowing an inactive client to become a new active client by replacing an old active client;

d)   determining whether the hidden partition includes data associated with the new active client; and

e)   placing the data associated with the new active client in a data partition of the plurality of partitions if the hidden partition includes such data, wherein the data partition is visible to the network operating system during normal operation.

23.   The method of claim 22 further comprising:

f)   removing the data associated with the old active client from the data partition; and

g)   copying the data associated with the old active client to the hidden partition.